

Message Text

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ACTION SS-14

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P 161536Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9128

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 5933

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FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AU, YU

SUBJECT: SLOVENIAN MINORITY ISSUE: REQUEST FOR KISSINGER-
KREISKY MESSAGE

REF: VIENNA 5712

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM PROVIDES BRIEF ANALYSIS OF
ISSUE, PREDICTS LIKELY NASTY YUGOSLAV-AUSTRIAN CONFRONTATION
OVER ISSUE AND RECOMMENDS, AS MOST HELPFUL ADDITIONAL US
MOVE AT THIS JUNCTURE, LETTER FROM SECRETARY TO AUSTRIAN
CHANCELLOR EXPRESSING HOPE THAT KREISKY WILL TAKE ALL
POSSIBLE STEPS TO RESOLVE ISSUE TO SATISFACTION OF ALL
PARTIES CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

2. CHANCELLOR KREISKY TOOK WATERSHED DECISION LAST WEEK IN
SLOVENIAN MINORITY ISSUE, WHICH HE NO DOUBT FELT WAS SOUND
ONE FROM DOMESTIC POLITICS STANDPOINT BUT WHICH COULD PROVE
DISASTROUS FOR AUSTRIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND EVENTUALLY INVOLVE
USA AND USSR, AS SIGNATORS TO 1955 STATE TREATY, IN NASTY
YUGOSLAV-AUSTRIAN CONFRONTATION OVER ISSUE.

3. ON JULY 7, AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT, UNDER PRESSURE OF DEADLINE
FROM KREISKY GOVERNMENT, UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED TWO BILLS ON
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MINORITIES MATTERS WITH ANNOUNCED AIM OF FULFILLING GOA

COMMITMENTS UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF 1955 STATE TREATY RE MINORITY RIGHTS FOR AUSTRIANS OF SLOVENE OR CROATIAN ETHNIC ORIGIN. ONE BILL PROVIDES FOR PROMOTION OF MINORITIES (USE OF LANGUAGE IN COURTS, SCHOOLS, TOWN SIGNS, ETC.) BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY 1977 UPON IMPLEMENTATION OF SECOND BILL WHICH SETS FORTH PARAMETERS OF MINORITY CENSUS, UNDER RUBRIC OF CONDUCTING LANGUAGE CENSUS, IN FALL OF 1976.

4. SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERS, WHO ADAMANTLY CONTINUE TO OPPOSE ANY LINKAGE OF EXERCISE OF TREATY RIGHTS WITH NEED FOR LANGUAGE CENSUS, HAD NO INPUT INTO FINAL STAGES OF DRAFTING OF LEGISLATION AND NOW LOOK TO YUGOSLAVIA TO SUPPORT THEIR OPPOSITION TO LEGISLATION AS VIOLATION OF SUBSTANCE AND SPIRIT OF 1955 AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY AND OF HELSINKI FINAL ACCORD. MINORITY LEADERS HAVE ALSO CALLED FOR BOYCOTT OF LANGUAGE CENSUS, TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 14.

5. ISSUE IS COMPLICATED ONE AND BASED HISTORICALLY ON STRUGGLE BETWEEN SLAV AND GERMAN-SPEAKING PEOPLES IN WHAT IS NOW SOUTHERN CARINTHIA TO OBTAIN THEIR POLITICAL AIMS. ISSUE HAS SERVED AS "HOLY CAUSE" FOR EXTREMISTS ON BOTH SIDES IN CARINTHIA TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL AGITATION AND DEMONSTRATIONS, DESTRUCTION BY BOMBINGS OF PUBLIC MONUMENTS TO AUSTRO-GERMAN NATIONALISTS AND AUSTRO-SLOVENE PARTISANS, TEARING DOWN OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS, AND SMEARING OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS IN RECENT YEARS.

6. WE HAVE CLOSELY MONITORED AND KEPT WASHINGTON FULLY INFORMED ON DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF EVOLVING SITUATION (REFTEL PROVIDES OUR LATEST ASSESSMENT). WHERE APPROPRIATE, E HAVE QUIETLY ENCOURAGED AUSTRIANS TO SEEK SOLUTION TO ISSUE MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES, CITING POSSIBLE INTERNATIONALIZATION UNDER ARTICLE 35 OF STATE TREATY AND US INTEREST IN ASSURING CONTINUED GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND WESTERN DEMOCRACIES AS WELL AS STABILITY AND PEACE IN EUROPE GENERALLY.

7. ADOPTION BY AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT OF MINORITIES LEGISLATION PROMISES TO ESCALATE INTENSITY OF FEELING OVER CONTROVERSY AND WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT, IN SUPPORT OF AUSTRO-SLOVENE MINORITY INTERESTS IN AUSTRIA, TO HOLD TO CONFIDENTIAL

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HERETOFORE GENERALLY RESTRAINED POSITION. GOY HAS ALREADY GIVEN GOA AIDE MEMOIRE ON JULY 1 ON ISSUE, CITING AUSTRIAN PROJECTED (SINCE ADOPTED) LEGISLATION AS VIOLATION OF 1955 STATE TREATY AND AS REALLY AIMED AT ASSIMILATING SLOVENE AND CROATIAN MINORITIES. YUGOSLAVS CAN BE EXPECTED TO ADOPT EVEN MORE TRUCULENT STANCE IN FUTURE. IT IS NOT UNLIKELY FOR YUGOSLAVIA TO ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE AUSTRIA TO CHANGE ITS APPROACH ON CONTROVERSY BY INTERNATIONALIZING ISSUE. THIS COULD TAKE FORM OF BRINGING

MATTER BEFORE UNGA, UNESCO, BELGRADE 77 OR PUTTING INTO PLAY ARTICLE 35 OF 1955 AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY RESULT IN FOUR POWERS (US, USSR, UK AND FRANCE) INVOLVEMENT IN ARTICLE 7 INTERPRETATION. KREISKY, IN TURN, IS LIKELY TO FIND HIMSELF UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE FROM AUSTRO-SLOVENE NATIONALISTS IN ALL THREE POLITICAL PARTIES IN CARINTHIA TO TAKE TOUGH STANCE VIS-A-VIS YUGOSLAVIA AND GIVE RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION TO ADOPTED BILLS.

8. I HAVE REVIEWED POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION OPEN TO US TO EXERCISE FURTHER POSITIVE INFLUENCE, WHERE POSSIBLE, ON EVOLVING DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THIS ISSUE AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT MOST HELPFUL ADDITIONAL MOVE AT THIS JUNCTURE WOULD BE LETTER FROM YOU TO CHANCELLOR KREISKY ON SUBJECT. LETTER SHOULD NOTE HIGH-LEVEL US CONCERN OVER POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SITUATION NOW DEVELOPING. US CONCERN IS LEGITIMATE ONE, BEING BASED ON US SIGNATURE TO 1955 AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY, ARTICLE 7 OF WHICH IS IN DISPUTE, AND ON MAJOR US INTEREST IN HAVING WESTERN DEMOCRACIES MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA, PARTICULARLY NOW. LETTER COULD ALSO NOTE THAT CONCERTED EFFORT BY YUGOSLAVIA TO INTERNATIONALIZE ISSUE COULD HAVE UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES OF INVOLVING IN MATTER CERTAIN GOVERNMENT (USSR) WHICH MIGHT NOT NECESSARILY JUDGE ISSUE ON ITS MERITS. LETTER SHOULD CONCLUDE WITH EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN CHANCELLOR'S COURAGE, STATESMANSHIP, AND GENEROSITY TO TAKE ALL POSSIBLE STEPS TO RESOLVE ISSUE ULTIMATELY IN MANNER GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. LETTER, TO BE OF MAXIMUM USE IN GOA'S DEALINGS WITH NATIONALIST ELEMENTS IN CARINTHIA, SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO KREISKY BEFORE END OF JULY WHEN PREPARATION OF IMPLEMENTATION DECREES FOR CENSUS AND MINORITIES PROMOTION BILLS REPORTEDLY WILL BEGIN. BUCHANAN

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